



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 1: Transnational threats and challenges I

As delivered by Dr. Michael Haltzel, Head of Delegation
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I would like to echo the Chair in expressing my Delegation's condolences to our Russian colleagues about the attacks this morning in the Parliament of Chechnya in Grozny.

The United States resolutely condemns terrorism in all forms and in all cases, without exception.

The threat posed by transnational actors, whether criminal or terrorist groups, has evolved significantly in the eleven years since our last Summit, and this body has made significant progress in developing capabilities to counter these threats. Consequently, a review of our commitments on this issue is crucial as we look ahead to the OSCE Summit in Astana. This review process is also of great importance to the work and priorities of our institutions, especially the Field Missions.

Last year in Athens we were pleased to join with the Russian Federation in co-sponsoring a Ministerial Decision on Transnational Threats. This was an important step in defining the nature of the challenge we face and, more importantly, it gave us the opportunity to develop responses.

The threats and challenges posed by terrorism, trafficking in persons and drugs, weapons proliferation and organized crime are not new to the OSCE. Most of them were clearly enunciated in the 2003 Maastricht strategy. Our task today is to adapt these policies successfully to counter the complex and overlapping nature of the threats we face and to show why a truly integrated response will prove successful in countering the scourges of terrorism, transnational crime, and weapons proliferation. At the same time, we must remain mindful of preserving and building on the specific expertise the OSCE has established in many of these areas.

Additionally, we must consider our response to these threats across all three OSCE dimensions. So, as terrorism and human and drug trafficking, for example, combine or take on new forms, we must be prepared to draw from the toolboxes of the Human Dimension and Economic and Environmental Dimension, as well as from that of the Politico-Military Dimension.

The OSCE has a substantial history of confronting traditional transnational threats individually. With respect to our role in combating terrorism, the OSCE mandate has expanded over the past decade, through an increasingly sophisticated and detailed program of action carried out by the various field missions and the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU). The OSCE plays a useful role in building both regional ownership of the United Nations (UN)

counterterrorism framework and indigenous counterterrorism capacity at the national level. This is done through the sharing of best practices and the implementation of counterterrorism training of police, border officials, prosecutors, and members of the judiciary. These programs are designed to improve the ability of national and local leaders to mitigate the vulnerabilities on which terrorism thrives. We are committed to working with our OSCE partners to promote these efforts in response to increasing needs, especially in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The United States has supported, both financially and politically, many of these activities, and we are working closely with the ATU and key national partners to develop further projects, including empowering and engaging with civil society and business community leaders by seeding effective initiatives that help to counter violent extremism. As we pursue our counterterrorism work more broadly, we must constantly bear in mind that there is no tradeoff between security on the one hand and human rights and the rule of law on the other. On the contrary, it is increasingly evident that the recruitment of terrorists is most successful where local dynamics increase popular disaffection and create conditions of desperation.

In order to utilize our limited resources in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism efficiently, we also support efforts to consolidate the OSCE's counterterrorism mandate.

The OSCE's efforts to fight organized crime and inhibit drug trafficking have also proven successful, although we believe that the OSCE should establish a strategic identity in this area, while working in close coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

As a transnational threat, trafficking in persons also requires robust cooperation among participating States. Sadly, our collective concerns expressed repeatedly over the past several years remain true today: the tremendous increase in incidents of human trafficking as well as in the number of victims; the unsatisfactorily low rate of prosecution of perpetrators; the access by organized criminal groups to ever more sophisticated techniques, financial resources and expanding networks; and the corruption or general lack of awareness among some officials, the media, and the public at large – all of which help to perpetuate this heinous crime. OSCE commitments call for zero tolerance for trafficking and for exploitation in all its forms, and for prevention through addressing discrimination and lack of economic opportunities, and advocating gender mainstreaming, educational opportunities, and consideration of the best interests of children and youth. The Astana Summit presents a groundbreaking opportunity to reaffirm at the highest political level our commitments to combat human trafficking and to protect its victims. We can do this by aggressively and clearly mapping out the scope of our work for the coming years. In all of these efforts, we should seek to strengthen the role and programs of OSCE's field missions, to carefully evaluate the effectiveness of OSCE activities, and to determine priorities for the way ahead.

I look forward to discussing other aspects of trans-national security in this afternoon's session.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.